2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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CHAPTER XXIII

RICE CULTIVATION

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A GROWING number of millions of acres are under cultivation in Lower Burma, and of this total all but some three hundred thousand acres are devoted to the planting of rice. Tobacco, sugar-cane, cotton, and oil-seeds of different kinds, as well as fruit-trees, form the other crops. Upper Burma has a greater number of crops, and the proportion of rice is far from being so overwhelming, though almost everywhere it is the chief crop. The alluvial lands of the Irrawaddy delta produce by far the greatest quantity of rice. It is certain that the best quality grain comes at present from this part of the country, but this may be due to more practised agricultural skill or long-continued tilling of the land. Hardly any possible number of crops in a season could apparently exhaust the fertility of the soil. Any part of the country, however, may be used for the cultivation of rice. The laziest farm is a swamp-land, where the ordinary rainfall is sufficient to produce the sodden ground requisite for a rice crop. Such low-lying plains and the riparian lands, annually flooded by the overflow of the river, are naturally best suited to Burmese indolence and are earliest taken up. Farther up the country, where the rain runs off the surface quickly and the land is too high for the south-west monsoon floods, it is necessary to resort to irrigation, either by the obvious method of dams or by ingenious water-wheels. Finally, there is the laborious taung-ya cultivation, where whole hillsides are cleared of trees to produce a crop. This hard work is left to mild aboriginal or other tribes, whom the Burman has long ago bullied out of the fat lowlands.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

footpaths, and with a huge green cheroot in his mouth, leisurely contemplates the operation. Everything is now in the hands of nature, and the agriculturist may lounge round his farm in peace till November; unless, indeed, excessive rain floods the ground and rots the crop, when a new planting out has to be gone through. The harvesting near Rangoon is entirely done by men from Upper Burma, or even by Indian coolies. They work for very little, and it saves the farmer a good deal of time and dignity to get all the cutting done for him. Accordingly, from October till December the steamers down the Irrawaddy used to be crowded with King Thibaw's subjects, all of whom had to leave behind them with their Myo-sa, or his delegate the Myo-wun, who vicariously "ate" the township between them, a pledge either of property or of some member of their family, that they would return to their country again. When they got back, very little of their hard-earned gains escaped the voracity of the royal officials. Now they come down by train, and after a trip or two learn enough to keep their money from enterprising fellow-countrymen. These anyathas, as they are called, behave remarkably well in British territory, notwithstanding the assertions of the rural police, who, being unable to detect dacoits, declare that these are all Upper Burmans who have come down for the harvest. They are really, however, mostly simple, quiet people, who are kept very much in awe by the bluster and town-knowledge of the down-country farmers, and work away zealously with their queer sickles, looking like the ordinary English article worn to half its original size by long use. It is worthy of notice that the grain is not mown close to the ground as in Europe. Except where there is a market for straw, very little more than the ears are cut off, and the straw burnt in the hot weather of March and April supplies a scarcely-needed fertilising to the soil. The reapers usually receive their payment from the farmer in grain, but they naturally convert this into money, or more portable goods, before they start off home again.

It does not take long to cut the crop, and then the corn is brought in to the homestead, commonly on rude sledges, more seldom in carts. The threshing-floor does not take

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Burmese AP4

to accumulate money, and their carelessness results in the constant death of their plough-beasts, so that matters usually remain exactly at the same level if the farmer does not actually get into permanent debt. The Scottish Highlanders have a pious wish, "May the free hand always be full!" If it is not always full in Burma it is consoling to think that it is seldom absolutely empty. Still, when the grandson succeeds he ordinarily finds that there is as little actual money hoarded up about the place as there was when the grandfather Po Gyi spent so many borrowed rupees at his uncle's funeral.

If rice cultivation is easy work in the low country, it is very different with the taung-ya, or hill clearings. Here the dense underwood and forest growth has to be cut down; and the more there is to cut the better the crop, for the soil needs fertilising badly, and all that is cut down is burned. Work is begun about January; everything is felled, bushes and all; and after the fallen logs have dried some time in the sun, the brushwood is heaped up round about them and the whole is set on fire. Some of the logs smoulder for weeks —perhaps till the first rains come. Then the ground is rudely dug up with hoes, and the ashes turned in. Cotton-seed is ordinarily mixed with the rice, which is of a quite different variety from that produced in the plains. It is sown broadcast, and the farmer has thereafter only to keep down the weeds, but this is not by any means a light task. The crop is ready by October, and furnishes little more than enough to support the family or community. The scanty manure provided by the wood-ashes is not sufficient to last more than two or three years; and when the crop is secured the party proceeds on to a new settlement, there to repeat the same laborious process. A very ingenious device for lightening the toil is resorted to where there is much heavy timber. Beginning at the bottom, they slightly cut the lowest trees on the upper side only, gradually increasing the depth of the notch as they advance up the hill, until at the top of the clearing they cut the trees completely through. These fall on the row immediately below them, and by their weight knock it down; and so the felling process is continued down to the bottom. Occasionally a tangle occurs

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma (1911 Peoples Campaigns) AP1
Burmese AP4

where some sturdy tree refuses to fall, and the clearing it away becomes a matter of very considerable danger. This taung-ya system is very wasteful as well as laborious, and annually draws down upon itself the denunciations of the English forest officers. But the hill-tribes who adopt it are too few to support themselves in any other way. They were long ago driven out of the plains by the Burmans, and now cling to their old nomadic life with a degree of obstinacy which Government officials, in a variety of ways, have found is not to be tempted by any tale of the present security and plenty of the low country, or even of the valleys among the hills. Rice, therefore, continues to be produced with the minimum and the maximum of labour; but none of the hill rice ever finds its way out of the country, and seldom even down to the plains.

The rice season, as far as the English merchant is concerned, commences in January and ends about May; but though this is pre-eminently the "busy season," there are purchases made in greater or less quantities all the year round. The relations between the great English rice firms and the simple jungle cultivators have not always been of a very elevating character, and it can hardly be denied that the fault lies wholly at the door of the foreigner. Missionaries in Burma are wont to mourn that their teachings are often rendered wholly nugatory by the want of scruple, and it might almost be said of honour, displayed by the great Rangoon rice firms. The good padres teach their proselytes that Christians are all honest and truthful. The ingenuous lads enter as clerks in a rice-mill and discover that Englishmen scarcely differ from the "poor heathen," except in being more lordly in the way of doing the thing.

Years ago, when there were not nearly so many mills as there are now, and not a quarter so many ships in the harbour during the rice season, things went on pretty equably. One day one firm would give a rupee or so more per hundred baskets, and the next day it would be another. But soon the mills began to increase in number and more ships came, and it was harder to get paddy. Then rival firms began to bid against each other. There was demurrage before their eyes, and it was terribly expensive work keeping the mill

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma(Europeans Indians)AP1
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establishment up to its full strength. And so prices rose and rose until they became absurdly high, and no one profited but the hawks that preyed on the simple Burmese cultivators. Then the English merchants held a meeting and all pledged themselves not to give more than the current market rate for paddy. This seemed a fair enough agreement; but after a while it was found that the boats all gravitated towards one or two firms. A little investigation showed that this was due to the fact that though they paid the ordinary rate, according to the compact, they had a smaller measuring basket than their neighbours. Accordingly every one went on reducing the size of his basket until the system became as ruinously absurd as ever it had been before. Then there was another meeting, at which it was unanimously agreed that this state of affairs would never do, and that it was absolutely necessary to come to some definite understanding. A committee was appointed which, after some deliberation, concluded that, if, in addition to abiding by the market rate, every one were bound to use a basket of a certain fixed size, there would be no chance for unfair speculations. A standard basket was therefore fixed upon; and the competitors were supposed to start fair again. But in no very long time, one firm put a false bottom in the basket, another wedged in a board; and so on, till matters got back to the old way. This state of affairs is hardly creditable to mercantile honour, and it certainly is by no means profitable.

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Independently of this, paddy has gone up in price at an alarming rate of late years. The first heavy rise was in 1877, at the time of the Madras famine. That was also the time of the resolution to have a standard basket. Rice was wanted in any quantity for the famine districts, and millers gave an altogether fabulous price for grain. The game went on merrily, introduced the scandalous "paddy morality," and lasted long enough to make the cultivators think the new prices had come in for good. Far too many Burmese farmers are heavily in debt to the "chetties," the money-lending caste of the Madras coast. The agriculturists have borrowed money to build a pagoda or a monastery; to give a grand feast on the

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occasion of their marriage, or their father's death; to buy a new yoke of oxen in the place of those that have been carried off by disease; to get seed-grain to sow their tracts of paddy land, the last season's gains having been lost in some gambling transaction when they were down in Rangoon. They have got into the chetty's books in some way at any rate; and hapless is the man, Burman or Englishman, who has dealings with the fat, shaven-headed Madras money-lender. He will be charged eight, ten, twelve per cent a month, or even more, before there is an end of the transaction. The chetties, therefore, took a particular interest in the rise of the price of paddy. High prices ensured their being paid; moreover, handling such unwonted sums of money made the ever-careless Burman reckless. He gambled, he gave great feasts, he got deeper and deeper into debt with the money-lenders. Consequently it was desirable that the prices should not go down; and as men of business the chetties understood how that was to be done; they made the Burman farmers hold back their grain. The Rangoon firms were in desperation to meet their contracts, the ships could not be kept waiting; and so prices were maintained at nearly famine rates. This more than anything else brought about the unlucky legerdemain with standard baskets. The appearance of the chetty element in the trade upset everything. They are charming men of business, and know all about bulling and bearing, and all the other civilised expedients of trade. Poor "Jack Burma," listless and good-natured as he is, would never have thought of such things of himself; but he is in the hands of his master. Not a single village in the jungle, however remote, is to be found without its bare-backed money-lender. He hovers round the paddy nursery; he watches the men planting out the handfuls of half-grown rice; he makes the farmer hold back the threshed-out grain till he gives the word: then he fixes the rate and all but takes the money himself.

The English merchants have struggled against the system, but with small success. They have laid out heavy sums in advances. The farmer is paid for the next year's crop before ever it is sown. This is generally only practi-

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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CHAPTER XXIV

A GRACIOUS PLOUGHING

LIKE the "royal elder brother" of China, the king of Burma ought to go out once a year to plough the fields. Thibaw Min did not do it during the first two years of his reign, and, as far as I am aware, was equally heedless throughout the later years also. The consequences ought to have been disastrous. According to tradition, the failure of the Lètwin mingala to come off should have caused a drought all over the country. But the Mo hkaung did not ensue; on the contrary, there was Mo kaung: an aspirate makes all the difference between a water-famine and seasonable showers. King Thibaw went very little indeed out of his palace. The annals of the country supply too many instances of kings, who, having gone abroad, found on their return to the palace gates that a usurper had taken possession of the throne in the meantime, and had no better greeting for his predecessor than a short shrift and a red velvet sack in which to plunge his body into the Irrawaddy. This unlovable custom had great weight with King Thibaw; but it was unwise of him to entirely abandon so venerable a tradition as the Lètwin mingala. It was at this ceremonial that one of the earliest marvels in the life of the Buddha Gautama happened. The king Thudawdana, with eight hundred noblemen save one, was ploughing the fields at the annual festival. Many country people came to see the great sight, and the city emptied itself. The maids who had charge of the little Prince Theidat laid him down under the shade of a tree and went to look on. The infant Buddha rose up as soon as they were gone, and sitting

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773 cross-legged in the fashion in which he is ordinarily represented in the images, became sunk in meditation. The careless maids all through the hot afternoon forgot about their princely charge, until the returning crowds and the setting sun reminded them of their neglect. Then they hurried to the tree and found that the Zampu tha-bye had maintained its shadow in the exact same position all day as it was in when Prince Theidat was first laid down. Notwithstanding the arc the sun had described, the shade had all along hung over the head of the meditating Payā Alaung.

241 796 643 The festival has therefore special reason to be celebrated by the descendants of the solar kings. It was also in every way a most picturesque fête, pleased the people, and offered a valuable opportunity for squeezing money out of them. King Mindôn never omitted it, even when he was grown old and portly, and little able to follow the slow-stepping bullocks. The ceremony took place in the beginning of June, about the time when the south-west monsoon usually breaks in Mandalay. The order went forth that the king would come out on such and such a day, and the people were enjoined to get ready. Not to see him—far from it. 643 349 The right of a cat to look at a king in Mandalay was not well established. The Amein-daw was issued in order that the heads over ten houses, the Sè-eing gaungs, might see that the road in their district was in proper repair, and that the yazamat had not got out of order. The yazamat, or king's fence, was a kind of lattice-paling put up in every street in the walled town, and in any of those in the suburbs through which the king was likely at any time to pass. It was formed of thick diagonal spars made into hurdles, which were lashed to heavy posts sunk in the ground at regular intervals. The whole was whitewashed, and often flower-pots stood on the top of the posts to enliven the structure a little; and it certainly wanted enlivening a good deal. The lattice-fence undoubtedly looked very neat and tidy, as a long straight road lined with Lombardy poplars does; but it became terribly tiresome, when you found all the streets looking exactly the same, with this six-foot-high heavy wood fence standing within a couple of feet or so of

Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

the walls of the houses, and shutting out all view of these wooden structures. It had, however, to be kept in constant repair, and the house-reeve has to go round carefully to see that none of the whitewash had been rubbed off, nor any of the transverse bars sprung with the sun. Behind these the entire populace had to stay when the king, or any one of the queens, went out. Woe betide the wretch who was caught outside them when the procession had started. He might consider himself lucky if he escaped with only a belabouring from the fasces of the shrieking lictors. No one was supposed even to look through the little diamond-shaped holes. As a matter of fact they did; but by way of condoning for the offence, they rendered it more difficult by planting flowering shrubs between the bamboo houses and the lattice-work.

The procession on the route out to the Lèya, the royal acre, to be ploughed, was magnificent. The king was clad in all his robes of state: the paso with the daungyôp, the peacock sacred to royalty; the long silk surcoat, or tunic, so thickly crusted with jewels that its colour could not be seen; the tharapu, the spire-like crown, also a mass of precious stones; the twenty-four strings of the Order of the Salwè across his breast; and over his forehead the gold plate, or frontlet. The great gates in front of the stairs from the Hall of Audience were opened for him, Except the King of the Golden Throne no one might pass through them; there was the low red postern at the side for meaner beings—a shrewd device to make every one bow his head to the palace, whether he liked it or not. His majesty mounted the white elephant, which none save he might ride—for is not the noble creature a king himself?

The king mounted the Lord White Elephant at the palace of the latter, to the right of the Hall of Audience; but the princes and ministers, all of whom came to attend the great function in their robes of state, might not enter their howdahs till the stockade of the nandaw had been passed. Then they fell into line in order of precedence, the wuns and wundauks wearing their official mitres—tall red velvet hats, with the top curled back like a nautilus, and the base surrounded with a row of gilt spear-heads. The long

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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644 796 crimson velvet cassocks edged with rich brocade were also worn, and every one paraded all the umbrellas, gold, or vermilion, or green, that he was entitled to.

Thus they pass through the official town into the suburbs. The road taken is that by the east gate, whence, in a line with the steps of the Hall of Audience, a broad way runs straight away to the blue Shan hills; or at least to where, in Mindôn's reign, the great Yankin-taung pagoda was being built, a few miles from where the hills rise, steep as out of a lake, from the flat rice lands. A death-like stillness prevails after the procession has passed the two timber guard-houses, between the tall columns of the eastern gate, surmounted by fantastic, triple-roofed teak pavilions, looking like Chinese joss-houses with their flamboyant carvings. The people are no doubt all there—we speak as those who know—crouching on their stomachs and peeping as best they can through yazamat and leaves of the bushes and legs of the soldiers that line the royal path all the way, striving their utmost to get a glimpse of the king and the splendour of his retinue; but they are not to be seen, and no one so much as sneezes. Thus the richly carved and gilt royal monastery is passed on the left; and immediately afterwards comparatively open ground is reached, stretching out on either side 796 of the high, raised road. A little farther on, half a mile ● 241 or so from the eastern gate, a halt is made at the selected 644 portion of the lèdawgyi. Ploughs stand ready in a long row, extending away as far as one can see; for all the princes and ministers must plough as well as the king. The royal plough is thickly covered with gold-leaf; the part on which his majesty stands—for it must not be forgotten that the Burmese plough is something like a giant rake, and is not really a plough to English ideas at all—is gold, roughened with pearls and emeralds. The milk-white oxen that draw it rival the Lord White Elephant in the splendour of their harness. Crimson and gold bands hook them on; the reins are stiff with rubies and diamonds; heavy gold tassels hang from gilded horns. The gold-tipped ox-goad his majesty wields is covered with jewels and flashes like a rod of fire in the sun.

The king ploughs a couple of furrows—or, rather, passes

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

the big rake once up and down the rain-sodden field—and then stops; for he is portly, and short of breath now. The ministers, no matter how fat they are, have to go on ploughing as long as the Arbiter of Existence chooses to look on. At last he declares that enough has been done, and preparations are made to go back again. He doffs his royal robes, for the tharapu, with its spire and jewelled ear-flappets, is burdensome, and the long surcoat, with its thousands of precious stones, is said to weigh about a hundred pounds. The Lord White Elephant is relieved too. He stalks back unencumbered, with his household of thirty retainers fussing about him with fans and swaying umbrellas.

The king gets into an open car, something like what Roman racing chariots are represented to have been. It is of course adorned as richly as everything else, and is drawn not by ponies or bullocks, but by men, eight of them pulling at each of the flexible shafts. The object is to prevent any one, the driver for example, sitting higher than the king. The English carriages presented at various times to different Burmese monarchs met with little approval. At first it was thought that the king was to sit on the box; but then it was found that with this arrangement there was nothing for it but that the driver should run by the side and therefore maintain a constant erect attitude in the presence of royalty. When it was found that the king was supposed to sit inside, with the driver two or three feet above him, a burst of indignation suggested that it was an insidious plot to put an insult on the majesty of the lord of the umbrella-bearing chiefs. For a time the vehicles were put away as lumber; but an ingenious handicraftsman adorned them with pyathats—five-roofed ecclesiastical or royal spires. They were now, when drawn by men, suitable for royal occupation; but unfortunately the solid teak-wood spires made them top-heavy, and especially unstable on rough Mandalay roads. They therefore degenerated into paraphernalia for exhibition on a kadaw day, or gauds for a procession at Tawadeintha feast time.

The king consequently returns on his low, gilt, native-made carriage, reclining on a mattress placed on the floor. He is now dressed in the ordinary national way, with a light

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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643 linen jacket and a slender pawlôn (a fillet of book-muslin wound round the head), showing the thin white hair tied up in a little knot on the top of the head. The chief ministers are round about, fanning him assiduously; and he is in extreme good-humour, chaffing the Kin Wungyi, the astute prime minister, on the way he let his bullocks straggle away at random and the difficulties he got into in trying to turn them at the end of the field; while the stout old Naingan-gya Wun-dauk is rallied about the absurd state of heat he was brought into by his exertions. Possibly, if a venture-some and inquisitive subject were to be seen now, the king might pardon him for his rude gaping. But nobody knows in what temper the king is, and the silence is as death-like
● 241 as when the party moved out. As soon, however, as the
796 great procession has passed and has wound its way into
527 the palace, the hitherto deserted streets are crowded again. Pwès begin with startling suddenness at every corner. Bands strike up; long lines of candles illuminate the streets at nightfall; rockets are let off, fire-balloons ascend, and every-thing is given up to rejoicing; for the lèdawgyi has been graciously ploughed, and the Lètwin mingala is a presage of abundant crops.

It is needless to say that the persons mentioned are now all dead and that the British Government does not maintain the Lètwin mingala. The spectacle of the Lieu-tenant-Governor balancing himself on a harrow with the Commissioner of the Northern Division and the Judicial Commissioner for Upper Burma as acolytes, or rivals, would not be impressive. A striking spectacle has gone and cannot be revived.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 APl Burma
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CHAPTER XXVI

SILK-GROWING

REARING silkworms, though a very profitable occupation, is not looked upon with any favour in Burma. To get the silk the pupa must be killed; and the taking of life in any form is an impiety always looked upon with great horror by all good Buddhists. Silk-growers are classed together with professional hunters and fishermen. The Four States of Punishment yawn for them, and their portion will be in the lowest abyss of the lowest hell. Still there are colonies of silk-growers in various parts of the country; but they live apart from the rest of the inhabitants as a rule, and often have entire villages to themselves. Colonel Horace Browne who, more than any other Englishman took an interest in the ways and occupations of the districts under his charge, states that the cultivators near Prome, where more silk is produced than in any part of Burma, are nearly all Yabeins —a race of the same stock as the Burmese, but despised by them independently of their crime in the way of habitually taking animal life. So much has the cultivation of silk become identified with them, that to Burman ears the term Yabein is virtually synonymous with that of silk-grower. They usually live on the hillsides, occupying themselves like the poorer Burmans and Karens, with taung-ya cultivation; burning the forests on the slopes and sowing the ground thus enriched with the wood ashes, with rice, cotton, or oil-seed. The system is viewed with very little approval by the government officials, for the taung-ya soil, hardly exhausted by the single crop raised off it, immediately produces a dense shrub-growth of no use to anybody, certainly not to the foresters.

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16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
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CHAPTER XIII

FESTIVALS

'The law is sweet, filling the soul with joy.'
Saying of the Buddha.

THE three months of the rains, from the full moon of July to the full moon of October, is the Buddhist Lent. It was during these months that the Buddha would retire to some monastery and cease from travelling and teaching for a time. The custom was far older even than that—so old that we do not know how it arose. Its origin is lost in the mists of far-away time. But whatever the beginning may have been, it fits in very well with the habits of the people; for in the rains travelling is not easy. The roads are very bad, covered even with water, often deep in mud; and the rest-houses, with open sides, are not very comfortable with the rain drifting in. Even if there were no custom of Lent, there would be but little travelling then. People would stay at home, both because of the discomfort of moving, and because there is much work then at the village. For this is the time to plough, this is the time to sow; on the villagers' exertions in these

16;Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

months depends all their maintenance for the rest of the year. Every man, every woman, every child, has hard work of some kind or another.

And so, what with the difficulties of travelling, what with the work there is to do, and what with the custom of Lent, everyone stays at home. It is the time for prayer, for fasting, for improving the soul. Many men during these months will live even as the monks live, will eat but before mid-day, will abstain from tobacco. There are no plays during Lent, and there are no marriages. It is the time for preparing the land for the crop; it is the time for preparing the soul for eternity. The congregations on the Sundays will be far greater at this time than at any other; there will be more thought of the serious things of life.

It is a very long Lent—three months; but with the full moon of October comes the end. The rains then are over; the great black bank of clouds that walled up all the south so long is gone. The south wind has died away, and the light, fresh north wind is coming down the river. The roads are drying up, the work in the fields is over for a time, awaiting the ripening of the grain. The damp has gone out of the air, and it is very clear. You can see once more the purple mountains that you have missed so long; there is a new feeling in the wind, a laughter in the sunshine, a flush of blossom along the fields like the awakening of a new joy. The rains are over and the cool weather is coming; Lent is over and gladness is returned; the crop has been sown, and soon will come the reaping. And so at this full moon of October is the great feast of the

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

nearly every house there will be a loom, where the wife or daughter weaves for herself or for sale. But many men weave also, and the finest silks are all woven by men. I once asked a woman why they did not weave the best silks, instead of leaving them all to the men.

'Men do them better,' she said, with a laugh. 'I tried once, but I cannot manage that embroidery.'

They also work in the fields—light work, such as weeding and planting. The heavy work, such as ploughing, is done by men. They also work on the roads carrying things, as all Oriental women do. It is curious that women carry always on their heads, men always on their shoulders. I do not know why.

But the great occupation of women is petty trading. I have already said that there are few large merchants among the Burmese. Nearly all the retail trade is small, most of it is very small indeed, and practically the whole of it is in the hands of the women.

Women do not often succeed in any wholesale trade. They have not, I think, a wide enough grasp of affairs for that. Their views are always somewhat limited; they are too penny-wise and pound-foolish for big businesses. The small retail trade, gaining a penny here and a penny there, just suits them, and they have almost made it a close profession.

This trade is almost exclusively done in bazaars. In every town there is a bazaar, from six till ten each morning. When there is no town near, the bazaar will be held on one day at one village and on another at a neighbouring one. It depends on the

to 2½. Mangoes in season cost four annas for ten. In camp they have eaten mangoes twice in six months, six for one eating, Re. 1/- for six. 263 435 178

MAYAN-THEE-AMBE (mariam-fruit-ripe: Bouea burmanica, Griff.) are eaten in the afternoons, with salt. Similarly with unripe ones. They are also eaten with rice and NGAPI YE. In Pathee about ten fruits were eaten almost daily when in season.

NGA PYAW-THEE (banana-fruit: Musa paradisica, Linn, Sub-sp, sapientum, K. Schum). Bananas are sometimes eaten with rice during the main meals but usually by themselves. In Pathee one bunch a day containing 13 bananas and costing three annas were eaten during four or five times a month. In camp the same bunch costs four annas and bananas are eaten five times a month.

THAGYAR-LON (sugar-ball) or sweets, and CHO-CHIN (sweet-sour) are bought. Ma Aye Myaing has never seen these being made and hence does not know the process of manufacture. The THAGYAR-LON are round sweets also but are shaped like small orange pods and weighing about six to the tical. They are eaten only in camp. The consumption of sweets is limited to the youngest. She gets 6 THAGYAR-LONS a month at one anna for two and two for an eating; and 18 CHO-CHIN a month at an anna for six and six for one eating.

Ma Aye Myaing gave the following data on the period of the year when the foods used by the family are available. 262

Fish is obtained from the fishery in Pathee from the month of Tawthalin to the month of Pyatho. From the other places in the river, fish was obtained from Tabodwe month to the months of Kason and Nayon. The varieties of fish remain the same in both fishing areas. Shrimps are plentiful in Pyatho month and lobsters in Tasaungmon and Nadaw.

KALA-BE (dhall): In common with a great number of peas and beans, KALA BE appears about the month of Tabaung. However, since these are not very perishable, they can be kept in stock for the whole year and made available in any month.

KAYAN-THEE (brinjal): The brinjal plant starts to bear fruit in the month of Pyatho and continues to Kason and Nayon. In Tawthalin and Thadingyut, brinjal fruit was brought to Pathee from other villages from the fields not on the river banks. Here in Rangoon they notice that brinjal fruit is available all year round.

PE-LINBWE-THEE (snake beans) were available during the months of Kason, Nayon, Waso, Wagaung, Tawthalin and Thadingyut.

In Rangoon many of the plants and vegetables that were cultivated only seasonally back in Pathee and the other district villages, are cultivated all the year round. The ready market in Rangoon encourages the districts lying just outside Rangoon to produce whatever plants they can and send them to town. [369] [241]

PE THEE (beans): these appeared in Pathee for 9 months in the year. The first period is from Tasaungmon to Tagu, and the second from Waso to Thadingyut inclusive. In Rangoon this is available all year round.

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HSAN (rice): During the months of Kason and Nayon the paddy grains are sown in the nurseries, and the seedlings are then transplanted to the fields during Waso and Wagaung. In other fields where no transplanting is carried on, the seeds are sown broadcast in Kason and Nayon. There are some species of paddy grain that ripen earlier than the rest. However, from the point of view of the consumer, rice is available all the year round.

NGAYOKE-THEE (chillies): The seeds are planted during Waso, Wagaung and Tawthalin and transplanted during Tasaungmon. The chillies

21: Htin Aung · E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

527 796 532 174 one, and each gives a special dance of its own.[1] At night, as part of the celebrations, there is a feast of fools. Young men and boys roam the village, throwing *zibyu* fruits at houses and stealing things, which will be found in the centre of the village the next morning: the objects of the good-natured theft are mostly articles that would provoke laughter—such as a lady's under-skirt; or those which would cause temporary inconvenience in the morning—such as cooking utensils, steps from stairs, or a piece from the roof. The Feast of the New Year is one of mirth and foolery. It is known as the Water Festival because on that occasion, every Burman takes a delight in throwing water at his neighbour and getting soaked himself as the result of the other's counter-attack. The men derive great enjoyment from drenching the women, who in their turn are not slow to have their revenge. Young men group themselves and dance joyously along the streets, at times being chased by bands of elderly maiden ladies who lie in wait to catch the ringleaders. When caught, the youths are lightly bound with silken cords and their faces are blackened with soot. Then they are made to perform a monkey dance before being granted their release. The spirit of fun apparent in these Burmese feasts of foolery is akin to that which moved the young clerks of the *Parlement* of Paris and the members of the Inns of Court in London to stage their Feasts of Fools in medieval times.[2]

527 [561] As the villagers lead a communal life and every joy and sorrow of a villager is shared by all others, a joyful event is celebrated by a public feast. Marriage, birth, the admission of a son to his novitiate (for every Burmese boy enters priesthood for at least a week), and the piercing of the ear of a daughter are occasions for mirth and jollity. At these feasts they sing and dance and mimic, groups of villagers vie with each other for new methods of giving entertainment, and there [241] is keen rivalry between youths and maidens. The most mirthful feast of all is the Harvest Feast in February, when the paddy has been reaped, and the village is ready to enjoy a well-earned rest of four after a working period of eight months.

527 796 These folk feasts are of great antiquity, though, because of the essentially unchanging life in the villages, they continue to exist even at the present day. The Tazaungmôn and other Buddhist feasts

[1] The puppet show is described in a later chapter.

[2] Cf. E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, chap. xiii, 'The Feast of Fools'; also E. Welsford, *The Court Masque*, p. 2.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

104. OUTLOOK OVER MIXED FORMS OF CULTIVATION.

the vagaries of the rivers. A good season is one in which a large proportion of the fields have water enough for an early start and in which the rainfall is steady, not leaving the surface to dry up by a long break in the rain nor deluging the soil at other times. All the alluvial land of favourable elevation and quality is laid out in level rice-fields. Where the rainfall is ample—fifty inches and upwards—portions of the diluvial land with tenacious soil can be utilised in the same way by merely saving the surface-water. In regions of lighter rainfall, in a few favoured localities, such land is brought under rice by help of irrigation and if need be by terracing as well. The rice-fields are bordered by low turfy balks (*kazin*) about a cubit high, to keep in the water. These regular rice-lands form less than one-tenth of the gross area of the country. The rest is mainly irreclaimable, chiefly mountain, waste. The waste areas of the alluvial plains (*kwin*) are flooded from three to ten feet deep in the rains. They are clothed with elephant-grass (*kaing*) studded, through with silk-cotton trees and a few other species. The lowest levels in the *kwin* form shallow lagoons (*in*, No. 103) which dry up in the hot season. Dry-season crops—sugar-cane (which is also grown on the wet system), maize, lentils, and vegetables for a limited market—are obtained in the *kaing*.

105. HILL-PEOPLE MAKING THEIR CULTIVATION CLEARING (p. 149).

Burma has become the rice-mart of the world. Since the development of this trade the price of the staple export has more than quadrupled, producing in the lower country a prosperity which has no parallel in respect of its equal diffusion. It is believed that this development of the wealth of Pegu has been favoured by the upheaval

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

of the delta of the Irawadi, by which fresh silt-beds are raised to the cultivation level. The town of Thâton, now sixteen miles from the coast and without a sea approach, was, in historic times, a port. Ships came up to Tenaserim in the south, the ancient emporium of trade across the Peninsula to Siam, and to Akauttaung in the north, and probably to Pegu. A mass of precise data on this subject was collected by the late Mr. John Merrifield, who came to the conclusion that Tenaserim had risen fifteen to twenty feet in the course of the last 300 years. In 1900, ten and a half million acres were cultivated in Burma. The rice crop was estimated at three and a half million tons, of which two millions were exported, worth £14,000,000. Fallow lands were estimated at five and a half million acres and arable waste at twenty-four millions, out of a gross area of one hundred and one millions. In 1872 a considerable firm failed over the enterprise of bringing a few thousand acres of reputed arable waste at Kayásu under cultivation; the crops got so much water that they rotted. The area has lain waste ever since. Most of the waste land granted to companies has been resumed, on account of their failure to satisfy the condition of utilising the land. The conditions which render land suitable for wet cultivation are less simple than they appear at the first glance. It is possible that the estimate of the arable waste is much too high.

108. THE RICE PLANT IN THE EAR.

Where the fields depend on the surface-water for their supply, a margin of fallow has to be left; where they get a deposit of river-silt it is unnecessary. If manure is plentiful it is taken out on the fields. But this is seldom the case because the cattle are so much at large. On the outskirts of the rice-fields, which are dispersed in groups throughout the *kwin*, fallow land may readily relapse into waste. The depopulation of Pegu (Chronology, 1570, 1591–1740) threw great areas out of cultivation. Anyone was free to reclaim waste, and is so still. In Burma Proper, where good land is much scarcer than in Pegu, proprietors are fixed on the soil in many places by royal grants (*kye-mye, bhabaing*). There were also royal demesne lands leased to tenants.

In the dry zone of Burma Proper, rice cultivation is impracticable except where rivers flood their margins or where facilities for irrigation exist. Rice

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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108. PLOUGHING IN THE DRY ZONE.

is a luxury in that region, and a part of the requirement is imported from Pegu. Crops of sorghum and millet (*pyaung*, *hu*), sesamum (*hnan*) and various pulses (*pè*), as well as cotton (*wai*), are obtained on the better sort of soil, during the light rains, from July to September. The dry soil is too hard for ploughing even when moistened by such rain as falls. It is scraped up with harrows instead. Four oxen are yoked abreast and the driver rides on the beam of the harrow to give it weight.

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The wet or staple cultivation of the whole country begins between June and August, as soon as the grass-sod which has formed on the rice-fields in the by-season—and which has served for pasture in the interval—has got thoroughly water-logged. The soil is then turned, about six inches deep, with a wooden plough (*lè*, Nos. 102, 119) bearing a shoe of bronze or iron. Where elephants are available, a large *thu* is used which does the work of four ploughs. The clods left by the plough are broken fine, and the wet soil worked into slush by herds of buffaloes driven round and round in the fields. If there are not enough cattle, the plough-clods are worked down with harrows drawn by buffaloes or oxen (No. 325). A rotary implement is coming into use to prepare the clods for the harrow (No. 168). There is very little open grass-land in the moist region. Unless the scrub which springs up is cut, the land soon relapses into jungle.

[136]

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For the above operations cattle are needful to the cultivator, though he makes little use of the manure and does not use the milk at all. The cattle are only used for draught, and very little care is bestowed on breeding. Oxen

109. ELEPHANT PLOUGH.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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110. BUFFALOES TRAMPLING DOWN THE CLODS.

are worth twenty to sixty rupees a head, buffaloes twenty-five to fifty. The latter are heavier and more powerful, and better able to work in the wet and to forage for themselves, but they are subject to many distempers, of which the worst is anthrax. The noses of the draught-cattle are pierced and a thin rope rove through which is spliced at the back of the horns. During a great part of the year there is no work for the buffaloes, as they are of little service for wheel-draught; then they are left to roam at large. They frequent the streams and lagoons, where they are followed by egrets and crows, which pick the worms out of the mud as the buffaloes turn over in their wallow. While crops are standing, cattle have to be kept in pens at night, and to be herded by day. This work is done by children from twelve [857] years upwards. The buffalo-pen is made near the house, if possible in a water-logged spot where the animals can wallow in the mud, which protects them from the bites of gad-flies and mosquitoes. Where there is no wallow, smoky fires are made to keep the insects away. In certain localities of the delta cattle need to be protected with curtains. In the arid region fodder is grown for the cattle, but goats find pasture and are kept for their milk; they are worth five to twenty rupees a head.

243 The rice-fields first ploughed and ready are sown broad-cast for nurseries (*pyo-gin*). A month [231] later, when the rice-plants are about a foot high, they are taken up and transplanted into the prepared fields, a span apart. The roots are simply pressed down into the soft slush

111. DRIVING HOME THE BUFFALOES.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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244. MIXED HILL-CROP OF RICE, SESAMUM, AND TEAK, IN SEPTEMBER (p. 140).

of being nearly all heart-wood, having considerable strength, with moderate hardness and weight, working easily with axe, saw and chisel, taking nails, and above all, not rusting nails or iron in contact with it. It has a serviceable brown colour and an odour by which it may always be distinguished, due to the presence of an oil which repels the attacks of insects, notably of the termites, and which protects it from decay. Teak is in short the prince of eastern woods. At the end of the eighteenth century, teak was already being worked out of the Burma forests and brought to port, where the foreign shippers had established saw-pits for squaring the logs. The steel pit-saws found their way into trade and gave an impetus to wood architecture, of which the ecclesiastical buildings of Burma are the chief examples. Timber-traders started building teak ships in Burma, employing Chinese carpenters. This business has been abandoned, but lighters are still built.

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The teak-tree (*tectona grandis*) occurs in patches of the dry mixed forest, the forest namely of which the principal element is a deciduous bamboo, with timber trees of fifty or more deciduous species scattered through it. Of these species about half a dozen produce serviceable timber. The bamboo-stools send up their culms to heights of forty and sixty feet in the course of a few weeks, before their branchlets and leaves appear. By means of this the bamboo has the advantage over all other vegetation. The seedlings of trees have to struggle up under its cover. At intervals of twenty to thirty years the bamboo species flower, to grow again from seed. Then is

243. FLUE OF FACTORY BURNED TEN YEARS.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma APl
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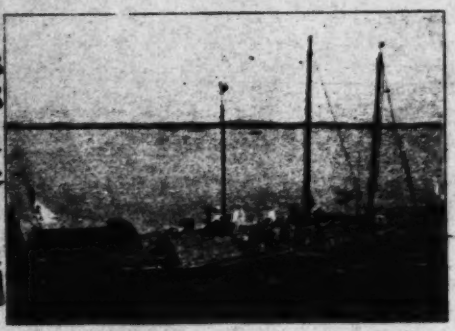

568. BRINGING THE PADDY TO THE RICE-MILLS.

ot every class and caste, with his foreign connection and longer experience, has an incalculable advantage over the untravelled Burman. Beginning with a lower standard of comfort than the Burman—squatting on the bare soil where the poorest Burman makes a floor, wearing cotton where the other wears silk, and being able to improve his original condition upon half the return that the Burman expects for his work—the Indian immigrant finds land worth his labour which the Burman leaves waste. The influx of races whose religion it is to multiply, without regard to the prospect of subsistence, must speedily result in lowering the scale of life for everyone in Burma—a country of which it may now be said that "a large share of the happiness of each individual is derived from the consciousness of the well-being of other individuals." (Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Ethics*, Vol. I., p. 297.) Commencing by hiring the cheap Indian labour to reap his corn, then to plough and till his fields, the while emulating his neighbours in superfluous works, the Burman is apt to end by becoming the debtor of his servant, and mortgaging to him his lands. It seems to many that there is no escape for the Burman from the Indian flood that now menaces his country. But up to the present no class of Indians has attempted to deal with land subject to the vicissitudes of the Burman riverain soil. It is unlikely that people of less versatility and resource will establish themselves there. In 1879, when the vagaries of the Irawadi had submerged the cultivation on the Panhlaing creek some twelve feet, and the eaves of the houses were under water, the cattle were saved in hasty platforms made in

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569. PONGHOIS AT THE FACTORIES.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 API Burma API
Indians
Burmese API

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trees. All that the villagers asked for (and of course got) was exemption from land-tax. Another hopeful feature is that the Burman is not devoid of the quality of self-criticism. With the Indian retail trader comes also the wholesale merchant—Persian, Parsi, Súrati, Chetti and Bania. And the Burmans at large
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accept the situation, never dreaming that by travelling abroad and seeing for themselves how other nations manage and how they fare, they might learn to conduct their own business, and help to save Burma from sinking to the level of proletariate countries. Natives of India and China have learned so much in their capacities of assistants to European merchants that they are getting the retail trade in European goods to themselves. Even as importers, with their agents in Europe, they are making themselves independent of the European merchant in the East. The European spheres of activity on which Burmans

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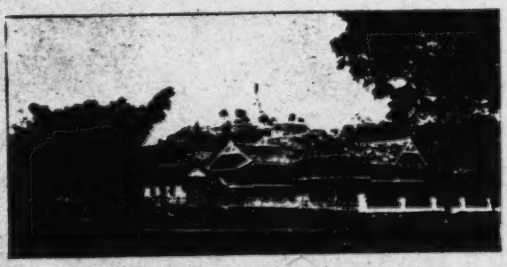

868. EUROPEAN TYPE OF HOUSE.

have entered are saw-mill enterprise and the profession of advocacy, in which latter they have attained a high standing.

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To the Burman, the native of India is the foreigner *par excellence*—*Kalá*—and shares the disrepute that a stay-at-home people commonly accord to the foreigner, especially when he is a needy one. To them he is the dog that eats the crumbs which fall from his table (" *Kwe-Kalá!* "). While the Chinaman, despite his uncouthness and uncanny parasitic trade, is considered an eligible
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man, *Kalá-mayá*—nigger's-wife—is a term of reproach. The *Kalá* half-breeds are called *Zerbádi*. They appear to possess fewer good qualities than either of the pure races. The Euro-Burman half-breeds are called *Bayinyi*—(Feringhi, the Indian equivalent of Frank) explained by the Burmans as *Bayin-dyi* (adherent of) the Great Prince (the Pope).

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Europeans are the only remaining foreigners whom the Burmans encounter, excepting a few Armenians, Jews and Malays. Armenians were beginning to play

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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414. WATER-THROWING AT NEW-YEAR.

Party feeling, which often runs high between the quarters of a village, with their rival *kyaung* and *zedi*, finds an outlet at *Tagú* in the tug-of-war (*lun-zwè*). As the superstitious whistle for the wind, so do they expect to tug in the monsoon by this means, at the season when everything is panting for rain.

After *Tagú*, the next festival season is *Wàzò*—in June—the commencement of the Buddhist Lent. This season is signalised by the *Shinláung ftes*, described in Chapter III. During Lent there is no regular festival.

The great festival of *Thadlndyút* celebrates the close of Lent. It falls in October, when the rains are generally over, and is the one for which the most extensive preparations are made. Every festival is signalised by the offerings made to the *yahán*. But now they are literally "poured" in profusion, as the word implies (*zun-láung*). *Yazamá*—paths fenced with bamboo trellis, such as those prepared for the progress of royalty—are got ready along the chief thoroughfare. Through these on the morning of the great day the *yahán* defile in endless procession. As many as a thousand *yahán* may be invited to receive the *Thadlndyút* offerings in a large town. The offerings are poured into the alms-bowls by the laity; scholars are stationed at intervals to relieve the *yahán* of their loads of offerings. After the *yahán* come *pòthudaw* and *mèthilá*. Both ends of the *yazamá* are decorated with arches of bamboo and tinsel. About these are grouped life-size figures of mythical import—dragons to guard the entrance, princes and princesses of the *nats* to take part in the honour done to the *Thingè* (No. 151). In the evenings fire-

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415. KANBOM PROCESSION AT NEW-YEAR.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
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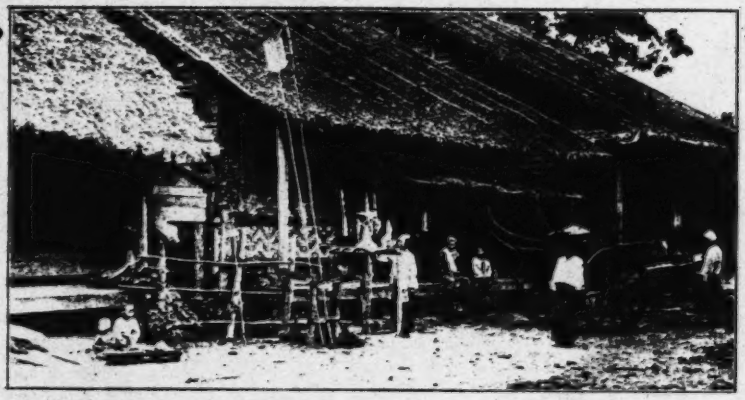

431. DECORATING THE THEBONZEDI p. 127.

CHAPTER IX

AGE AND MORTALITY

165
888

432. A DAUGHTER PRAYING HER PARENTS TO NOBO-SAT.

THE men and women of the tropics age and die sooner than those of temperate climates. One meets reputed centenarians in Burma, but it is rarely that the old people can prove their age, unless they are able to connect their year of birth with some historical event. Ninety years is a very great age for a native of Burma to attain. When parents are past their prime their children pray them to *nobo-sat*, which means that they should be at the children's charge for the remainder of their lives, as the children had first been at their parents'. The turning-point is not marked by any formality, but a child approaching parents on a solemn occasion adopts the gesture of veneration. The aged are not idle; they preserve a great elasticity of mind and interest in things;

888

30: Maung Htin Aung E-4 (no date) 1953 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

Although the kingdoms of Prome and Thaton probably based their wealth on trade and commerce, and the kingdom of Pagan based its power and wealth on commerce, the Burmese have been simple agriculturists throughout their history, and therefore Burmese customary law of contract and torts dealt with the business of agriculture, such as water-rights, land-rights, hire of cattle, carts, and implements, and with the relations between employers and laborers. As has been stated before, the Burmese law of contract and tort is no longer valid, and although the Burmese still remain agriculturalists, their business of agriculture is no longer simple as in the days before the British annexation. Nonetheless, some of the rules of law in contract and torts are still of interest. For example, let us consider the law relating to payment of wages to laborers. The Burmese law did not give emphasis to that part of the wages which was to be in the form of money. But it specifically laid down that (1) in the case of an agricultural laborer, he was to receive, in addition to wages in money, a suit of clothes at the end of each "season"—i.e., the "growing season" and the "reaping season," and (2) in the case of a nonagricultural laborer, he was to receive, throughout the period of his employment and in addition to wages in money, "regular meals of rice and curry." For the agricultural laborer, who had his own store of paddy, clothing was of great consequence, and to the nonagricultural laborer food was of great consequence. Thus the Burmese law ensured that the fluctuation either in the general level of wages or in the value of money should not adversely effect either the laborer or his employer. Moreover, as both the laborer and the employer wore the same homespun clothes and ate the same food, the arrangement was fair to both parties. With regard to professional services rendered also, the Burmese law attempted to be fair to both parties, as could be seen from the following rules of law regarding physicians and lawyers:

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If a physician has been called for fee to attend to a sick person, but the sick person recovers or dies before the physician reaches